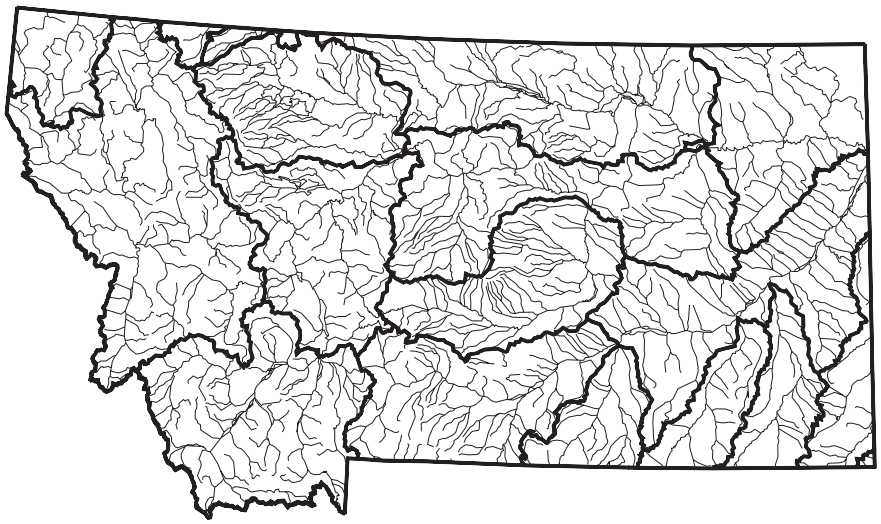
Montana



Basin Boundaries
(USGS 6-Digit Hydrologic Unit)

For a copy of the Montana 1996 305(b) report, contact:

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Surface Water Quality

Most of Montana's rivers and streams (74%) have fair water quality that periodically fails to support aquatic life uses. Another 5% have poor water quality that consistently fails to support aquatic life uses. About 17% of the surveyed lake acres have good water quality that fully supports fish and aquatic life, 46% fully support swimming, and 94% fully support drinking water use. Agriculture (especially irrigated crop production and rangeland) impairs 63% of the surveyed stream miles and 57% of the surveyed lake acres. In general, nonpoint sources are a factor in 90% of the impaired rivers and 80% of the impaired lakes. Resource extraction, forestry, and municipal sewage treatment plants have less widespread impacts on water quality.

Ground Water Quality

More than 50% of Montanans get their domestic water supply from ground water sources. Ground water is plentiful and the quality is generally excellent, but Montana's aquifers are very vulnerable to pollution from human activities that will expand as the population expands throughout the river valleys. The Department of Health and Environmental Sciences and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation are jointly preparing a Comprehensive Ground Water Protection Plan to protect ground water quality and quantity.

Programs to Restore Water Quality

Montana is actively pursuing interagency/interdisciplinary watershed planning and management. Currently, five large watershed projects are under way in Montana: the Flathead Lake Watershed Management Plan, the Blackfoot River Watershed Management Project, the Grassroots Planning Process for the Upper Clark Fork Basin, the Tri-State Clark Fork Pend Oreille Watershed Management Plan, and the Kootenai River Basin Program. Each program advocates collaboration by all interested parties to devise comprehensive management options that simultaneously address all major factors threatening or degrading water quality.

Programs to Assess Water Quality

Montana will need to expand its monitoring and assessment program to adequately measure the effectiveness of the State's nonpoint source control program and other watershed management programs. To date, only 10% of the State's stream miles and 2% of the lakes have been assessed. Fixed-station monitoring is limited to three of the State's 16 river basins: the Flathead and upper and lower Clark Fork basins. The Department will ask the State Legislature to fund additional staff and operating expenses to expand ambient monitoring in the State. The State is also concerned that the U.S. Geological Survey may discontinue trend monitoring in Montana.

Individual Use Support in Montana

Designated Use[a]	Total Miles Surveyed	Percent: Good (Fully Supporting)	Good (Threatened)	Fair (Partially Supporting)	Poor (Not Supporting)	Poor (Not Attainable)
Rivers and Streams (Total Miles = 176,750)[b]						
	17,894	19	2	74	5	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-
	17,796	71	<1	26	3	-
Lakes (Total Acres = 844,802)						
	625,192	17	0	83	0	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-
	625,592	46	0	53	1	-

– Not reported in a quantifiable format or unknown.

[a] A subset of Montana's designated uses appear in this figure. Refer to the State's 305(b) report for a full description of the State's uses.

[b] Includes nonperennial streams that dry up and do not flow all year.

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.